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The Eden Diet

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, *Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530*

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My Prayer

Dear Lord,

I pray that you will help me surrender to your divine guidance, not only in the area of my disordered eating habits, but also in all aspects of my life. I pray that you gently and mercifully break down my barriers to better health, whether the barriers are mistaken beliefs about food, eating, dieting, and exercise; conscious or unconscious unhealthy eating habits; or sin. I ask that you forgive my sins, give me victory over them, and enable me to succeed not only in the area of improving my health but also in all areas of my life.

You, Lord, are my inheritance. You are my food and drink, my highest joy.

Amen.

Introduction

Have you ever wondered what your life might have been like if Adam and Eve hadn't eaten the forbidden fruit? Think about it. If they hadn't disobeyed God and gotten us kicked out of the garden, perhaps we'd have been able to live there with them.

In paradise everything would have been easier—even weight control.

If we had lived in Eden, we would have eaten only when we were hungry, and we would have eaten less. Therefore, we would have automatically reached our ideal weight without trying.

Instead of food being the center of our universe, God would have been the center. We wouldn't even have thought about food until we felt hungry. That's right—we would have eaten primarily for sustenance and in response to our God-given internal hunger signals, not to escape boredom or to fill our emotional or spiritual voids.

And we would have eaten any food that was readily available without regard to whether it was good or bad for us. We wouldn't have had consciences about such things.

If, on occasion, we ate rich, high-calorie foods like honey, nuts, fatty meats, or dairy products, we would have done so without guilt. We wouldn't have worried about being too fat, and we wouldn't have felt the need to pay penance for our fatness by being on a perpetual diet.

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Regarding exercise, we would have expended energy the natural way—by walking and working and looking after the garden. It wouldn't have been a chore to exercise, and we wouldn't have done it to make up for overeating. We would have exercised simply as a means to an end and also because it felt good. It would have been a way to worship God with our bodies.

Wouldn't it be great if we could go back to that pure, uncorrupted way of thinking—or should I say not thinking—about weight control? What if we could just listen to our bodies' internal cues, eat only when we're truly hungry, eat less, and enjoy any food God provided without guilt? And what if we could once again think of exercise as being fun, as we did when we were kids? Or, at least, think of it as an act of worship?

We could be free from bondage to what we should or shouldn't eat, free from concerns about body image, and we'd be overflowing with the joy and peace of God. And we'd be thinner and healthier *without trying*.

Eden Was How It Could Have Been, but This Is How It Is

Many of us disregard or have never realized that God gave us hunger pangs for a reason: so that we would experience them. Instead, we eat incredibly large portions of food, and we eat so frequently that we rarely feel hungry. We eat *ahead* of our hunger rather than behind it.

Usually we eat for reasons external to our stomach, such as emotional, intellectual, or sinful reasons (the sight of food, the smell of food, depression, anxiety, stress, boredom, and greed). Or we eat according to the clock. We say, "It's time to eat," without even stopping to consider what our internal signals might say.

If we checked with our internal signals before eating, most of the time they'd say, "What? You don't need food yet."

In addition to having forgotten to use our hunger pangs, we also

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have another barrier to losing weight: when God put us in the garden of Eden, fattening food was harder to come by.

In the garden, if you wanted honey, you would have had to steal it from bees (which have stingers), so you probably would have thought twice about eating it. To get nuts, you would have had to collect them and crack open the shells with rocks (which would be painstaking work).

If you had any sense, you probably would have said, “Uhh . . . never mind about that honey up in that bee hive. I think I’ll just eat this green pepper and these berries right in front of me.”

Even if you decided to go for the less healthy foods, you would have listened to the inner wisdom God gave you and eaten only a small portion—just enough to quiet the hunger pangs so you could get back to thinking about God.

By contrast, now it’s easy and relatively inexpensive to get fattening food served in huge portions. You can have a large four-meat, extra-cheese pizza delivered to your home in thirty minutes or less. You can pick up an enormous fast-food cheeseburger combo meal in three minutes at the drive-through. Or you can microwave a grande burrito in thirty seconds at the convenience store.

Ironically, if you want to prepare a healthy homemade meal like a stir-fry, or even meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and vegetables, it might take you a couple hours.

And consider how we are tempted by food advertisements. They’re everywhere—on billboards, in magazines, in television and radio commercials, in pictures on the sides of delivery trucks, on Internet ads, and in coupon mailers that come to our homes. We’re constantly bombarded with reminders to eat, usually when we’re not actually hungry.

To top it all off, we have become exceedingly lazy. In the beginning, we had no choice but to exercise. Now we have labor-saving devices like automobiles, elevators, and washing machines that on the one hand help us but on the other hand hurt us. They allow us to expend less energy and gain excess weight.

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Should it be a surprise that we become more overweight and miserable with each passing year? We're doing everything opposite to the way God intended.

Can You Relate?

If you have a weight problem, do you eat in such a way that you rarely feel hunger? Perhaps you eat because of the time on the clock, completely disconnected from your internal compass—your God-given hunger pangs. Or you eat in response to the sight, smell, or taste of food when you're not hungry.

Perhaps you only feel hunger when you're dieting, and then, when you go off the diet, you stop feeling hungry because you go back to eating according to external cues. So you regain all the weight you lost on the diet—and more—which leads to more depression and more emotional eating.

Maybe you're so overcommitted in your schedule that you have no time to eat properly. You have to eat fattening take-out food several nights a week.

Or maybe your extensive to-do list distracts you while you eat and causes you to shovel in extra food without realizing it. It's no wonder you think you eat like a bird yet still gain weight. You eat mindlessly.

What about exercise? Do you think of it as a painful chore? Or do you enjoy moving around as you did when you were a kid?

If I just described you, don't worry. It's never too late to change. As you continue to read *The Eden Diet*, you will learn to submit your flawed attitudes and habits to God so you can receive a renewed mind as well as a transformed body, just as Paul talked about in Romans 12:1–2:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is true worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renew-

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ing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Just as a dog shakes off water, you'll shake off the fattening lies about weight control that the world has brainwashed you with. Then you'll replace those lies with God's amazingly simple truth for how to lose weight: follow the hunger-pang system he gave you in the beginning.

Doesn't it make more sense to cooperate with God's system than to fight against it?

We Must Change Our Ways before It's Too Late

The prevalence of obesity in the US is climbing at an alarming rate. In 1991, no state had an obesity rate above 20 percent. However, in 2009, two-thirds of the states reported obesity rates greater than 25 percent, and four states reported rates of over 30 percent.¹

What does that mean in terms of actual pounds? According to the National Center for Health Statistics, adults are, on average, twenty-five pounds heavier than similarly aged adults were in 1960.²

I assume you know that obesity is dangerous to your health, but I wonder if you know the full extent of it. Obesity causes high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obstructive sleep apnea, gallstones, and cancer, including breast, endometrial, prostate, and colon cancers. In fact, it will probably kill you one day if you don't change your ways, as obesity contributes to more than four hundred thousand deaths in the United States annually.

Even if obesity doesn't directly kill you, it will probably still ruin your life if you don't do something about it. Carrying around excess weight causes premature wear and tear on the joints, which in turn causes severe pain and disability.

And it limits you from engaging in the activities you enjoy. If you can't fit into the airplane seat or the movie theater seat, or if you can't walk because of knee or back pain, you take fewer vacations and

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engage in fewer social events. Then you become socially isolated and even more miserable and depressed.

We must do what it takes to improve our eating and exercise habits, not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of future generations. Over the next several decades, the life expectancy for the average American child is projected to shorten by five years because of the obesity epidemic, according to a report published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.³

Did you get that? I said your children and grandchildren might die five years earlier because of their eating habits. Now are you ready to set a better example for them? I assume you are, or you wouldn't be reading this book.

What Do I Know About Weight Control?

I'm a medical doctor. Specifically, I'm a physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist with subspecialty board certification in pain management. That means I help people achieve optimal physical functioning after illness or injury. Part of my job is to help my patients lose weight in order to take pressure off of their painful joints.

I received my medical degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo, completed an internship in internal medicine at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, and completed a residency in physical medicine and rehabilitation at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

In addition to those credentials, I have specialized knowledge about weight control. As an undergraduate at Cornell University, I minored in nutrition, completed a thesis on the control of body weight, and participated in obesity research under the guidance of a leading world researcher on obesity.

In medical school I was awarded two research fellowships. One was the American Gastroenterologic Association Medical Student Research Fellowship to study digestive diseases, and the other was the prestigious National Institute of Health Medical Student Research

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Training Fellowship. That allowed me the great privilege to study at the Center for Human Nutrition in Dallas, Texas, for two full years, under the mentorship of several world leaders in the areas of fat metabolism and nutrition.

I have yet another kind of weight-control education that perfectly qualifies me to write this book. In a way, it's the only part of my education I wish I *didn't* have: I grew up morbidly obese. I know from firsthand experience what it's like to suffer with—and then overcome—a serious weight problem.

As far back as I can remember I weighed double what the other kids weighed. By the time I was seventeen years old I was 5'1", weighed 207 pounds, and wore a tight size 20 jeans. My thighs were as big around as my waist is today.

As a junior in high school, I decided I'd had enough. I was tired of being made fun of, and I was tired of feeling self-conscious and miserable all the time. So I lost weight: seventy-five pounds, to be exact.

As you might expect, the weight loss completely transformed my body. However, it did little to change the underlying thoughts and attitudes about food that led to my obesity in the first place. I still had to undergo a mental transformation. Otherwise, I was going to gain that weight right back.

Eventually God showed me that the secret to weight control was as simple as looking inward—to the programming he'd given me in the beginning: my hunger pangs. He helped me identify my hunger pangs and use them as a compass to guide my eating.

Next he revealed why I gained the weight as a child. I had unconscious programming, automatic habits, and a sin nature that compelled me to eat for all the wrong reasons. Finally, he gave me practical tools that allowed me to resist the urge to eat when I wasn't hungry, even when faced with the greatest of temptations.

In the following chapters, I discuss the practical weight-loss insights and tools that God gave me. That way you can apply them effectively in your own life and achieve the slimmer, healthier body God intended for you to have in the beginning.

One Diet Fits All?

The Eden Diet is for people who want to break free from bondage to food and eating. It's for those who seek to make Christ (not food) the Lord of their lives. It's for those who wish to lose weight and become healthier in all dimensions (mind, body, and spirit). And it's for those who want to experience the fruits of the Spirit—peace, love, and joy—rather than strife.

But, the Eden Diet is not right for everybody. I don't believe in one-size-fits-all treatment. Obesity and eating disorders come about for many different reasons and therefore need to be treated in unique ways, depending on the individual.

Even if there were only one cause for obesity, different people would still require different treatment. There are at least twenty different anti-inflammatory medicines for osteoarthritis. It follows logically that different people need different dietary solutions for weight loss, as well.

Just as I don't expect my book to help everybody, I don't expect everyone to agree with me philosophically. *The Eden Diet* will not appeal to people of all religions. Though all people are invited to read it if they're interested, it's intended primarily for an adult Christian readership. If you are opposed to the message of Christianity, you should probably put this book down and read one of the many secular books that tout a similar anti-dieting philosophy for weight loss.

What if you are a Christian but are appalled by the idea of eating processed or fattening food in moderation? You can't understand how I, as a medical doctor, could advocate eating anything other than something 100 percent perfectly healthy. If you're an extremely healthy eater, please don't hurl stones at me because of my message. With all due respect, remember that not everyone is like you. Some people have emotional reasons for overeating; still others have eating disorders.

Please don't misunderstand. I love to eat vegetables. They truly nourish your body. It's just that I wish people wouldn't have philo-

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sophical food fights over which foods are right or wrong to eat. Doing so just causes people strife and distracts them from Christ, just as it did back in the days when people argued about whether it was right to eat meat that had been offered to idols.

My Christian Beliefs

I believe that God is love; everything he does is rooted in his love for you, and he is merciful, slow to anger, and quick to forgive. He wants desperately for you to repent and return to him, no matter what you did that caused your separation from him. He does not condemn you if you eat in a way that some people would call “wrong.” So, nobody else should either.

If you broke down and ate three unnecessary donuts to medicate your broken heart, God would NOT say, “Suzie, you are a BAD person! Now, I’m going to turn my back on you and not let you into heaven!” He would say, “Suzie, sweet child, what’s wrong? Are you sad? What was it that led you to try to find solace in donuts? Come to me and I will heal you.”

If you aren’t sure he’d say the latter, or if his mercy and grace are new concepts for you, you definitely need to finish this book and continue to read about the subject of “grace.”

Anytime you read a purportedly Christian diet book, filter the information you read about how to eat through what you know about God. Does the message bring forth the fruit of the Spirit? Does it center on love and peace and joy and relationship, or does it engender fear, unfounded guilt, shame, and depression? If the message condemns you, then know it’s not God who has been whispering in your ear.

How This Book Is Laid Out

The Eden Diet is organized into three main sections. In part 1, “A New Paradigm for Weight Loss,” I help you spot the lies you’ve been fed regarding food and eating. You can’t see how the truth fits together

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until the false ideas have been removed. I challenge the notion that you have to restrict normal food from your diet when you're trying to lose weight. I show you how the diet mentality actually makes you fat. And I show that eating fattening treats in small amounts and with intention can actually help you lose weight.

In part 2, "The Eden Diet: How to Get Skinny Eating Normal Food," I explain God's plan for eating and how following it will naturally lead you to your ideal weight. I show you how to tune in to your hunger pangs and how to feed them the way God intended, with a proper attitude and with a proper amount of food. And I show you how to eat (or not eat) as an act of worship.

In part 3, "How to Beat Temptation," I reveal how to overcome the temptations that cause you to eat in the wrong ways. I help you identify when emotions, sin, bad habits, and erroneous beliefs trigger you to eat for the wrong reasons. I also provide strategies to beat those temptations.

Finally, in the workbook, which is available separately on my website, www.TheEdenDiet.com, and through online and traditional bookstores, I provide even more tools that help you put the Eden Diet into action.

And God Said It Was Good

Now our journey together begins.

Let me describe to you the joy you're about to experience. If you read this book and adopt the Eden Diet for yourself, you will be freed from bondage. You're going to feel like a thousand-pound monkey has been lifted off of your back. You're going to be happier. You're going to be slimmer. And you're going to be healthier.

You're going to think about food as Adam and Eve did in the beginning: not often, and only when you're hungry. You're going to walk around less focused on food and more focused on God, to the point you actually forget to eat until your hunger pangs remind you.

Imagine. When you're hungry, you'll be able to eat even fattening,

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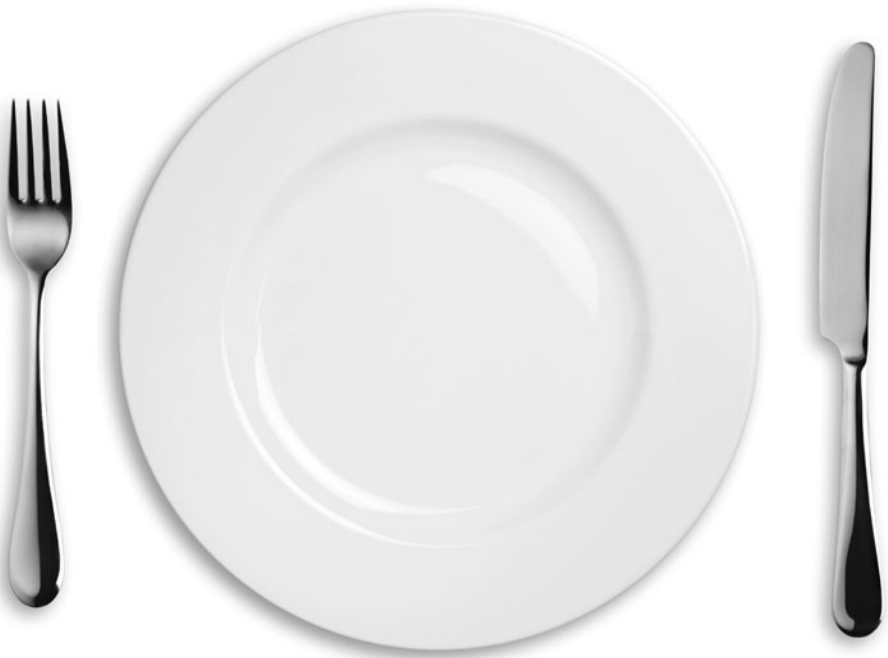
luxurious food, and you'll enjoy it a hundred times more—so much that you won't even want to eat the full serving. Half the food will bring you ten times the joy.

Not only will you be slimmer and more physically attractive, but also your joy will magnify your beauty. Everybody around you will want what you have.

Just think—you'll be a walking advertisement for the healing power of God.

Part One

A New Paradigm for Weight Loss





Overview of the Eden Diet

*Probably nothing in the world arouses more false hopes
than the first four hours of a diet.*

Dan Bennett

When I instruct male patients for weight loss, all I have to say is, “I want you to wait until you feel hunger pangs before you eat, and eat what you like but eat less, okay?” Then they respond, “Oh ... Okay, Doc!” and return three months later, weighing twenty pounds less. Just like that.

Women are more complex. Given the same instructions, they fight back, saying, “BUT ... I thought you were supposed to eat breakfast as soon as you open your eyes in the morning!” “BUT, I thought you were supposed to eat ten small, scheduled meals.” “BUT, I can’t eat bread because of the carbohydrates!” But! But! But!

Yes, I’m saying that, at the end of three months, my male patients return thinner, whereas a larger proportion of my female patients still have their big “BUTS.”

Nearly everyone knows that men have the physical advantage when it comes to weight control. Their bodies are designed so that they lose weight more quickly. However, in terms of weight control, men also have the psychological advantage. Their minds are less cluttered with bogus dieting rules and regulations that cause women to think

A New Paradigm for Weight Loss

themselves into a hole. They're not bogged down with all those "have to" and "can't do" beliefs about weight control that make women crazy—and overweight.

In terms of weight control, my male patients tend to be like the "new wineskins" that Jesus referred to in the parable of the wineskins. They're more accepting of fresh, new contents when I give them advice. In the parable of the wineskins, Jesus said,

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out, and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

MATTHEW 9:16–17

In that parable, Jesus was signaling to his listeners that the old ways of Jewish legalism and rule keeping were gone, and he was ushering in a new era of grace and mercy.

To apply this wineskin concept to dieting, I'm asking you to let go of your old ways of thinking. Instead, be flexible and accept new teaching, even if it requires you to let go of your old beliefs. If you're a chronic dieter, you need to relax your legalistic thinking and become more flexible, like a new wineskin. You must prayerfully seek the truth about how to lose weight in line with the instructions God programmed into your body, even if it conflicts with your old beliefs. It only makes sense to do that. If that rigid, old-wineskin diet mentality had worked for you in the past, you wouldn't be reading this book.

In this chapter, I explain why this book is different from the majority of other diet books out there, and then I introduce you to how you can best utilize this book for your benefit. That way you can reinforce and apply the Eden Diet principles more effectively and experience the fruit of the Spirit that God intended for you to have.

Conventional Wisdom Is Not Always Wise

By now, you've probably heard conflicting advice about how to lose weight. One source might tell you to eat a big breakfast and a tiny dinner, while another might say you should eat ten small meals in a day to jump-start your metabolism.

Or perhaps you've heard that you should cut out carbohydrates and eat only protein and fat so you can go into the fat-burning mode known as ketosis. Or that you should eat only high-fiber and low-fat or nonfat. Or that to lose weight quickly, you must eat only grapefruits, honey, and vinegar for three weeks straight.

In fact, you've probably been bombarded with so much information (and misinformation) about weight loss that you're entirely confused about what you should do. Or worse, because you followed diets destined to fail, you became not only confused, but you also gained even more weight and became depressed.

Trust me: it can be bad to have too much information about weight control. Having weight-control "knowledge" gives you a false sense that you can manipulate the metabolism God created. But you can't. No matter what biochemistry or physiology tricks you learn, you can't outsmart the weight-control system God created—not for long, anyway.

Consider the popular notion that you should have numerous small meals instead of three larger ones. On the surface, it sounds reasonable—even desirable. Who wouldn't want to eat ten times a day?

However, what if we were talking about a different bodily function, like urinating? I doubt you would ever say, "From now on, I'm going to urinate ten times a day because I heard it was good for me." Rather, you would trust your internal signals and wait until your bladder gave you the urge. You would let your normal, God-given programming flow automatically and naturally, without overthinking or trying to override the process.

Try to do the same with hunger. Forget about food in between

meals, and trust your hunger pangs to remind you to eat—just like God intended when he gave you those hunger pangs. If you eat frequent small meals, let it be in response to your hunger pangs, not because your conscience is trying to follow some kind of man-made schedule.

Forget About What the World Says — Look at What God Says

I call this book *The Eden Diet* for a very simple reason. If we became obese by eating and thinking in ways contrary to how God intended, we can heal our obesity by returning to his original plan—the way it was in Eden.

Don't take the name too literally, though. I'm not saying we should live in the forest and forage for nuts and berries. And I don't think we need to eat only vegetarian, organic, all-natural, homegrown food.

On the contrary: I'm a city girl. I like air conditioning in the summer and a heated home in the winter. I like my pillow-top king-size mattress, and I enjoy eating processed foods and grilled animal flesh as much as the next gal.

I am only suggesting that we try to reclaim a *part* of how it was in Eden. Those of us with weight-control problems must try to tune out our heads and tune back into our bodies' internal signals for the weight-control guidance. We must forget the potentially harmful rules the world gives us about what, how, and why to eat, and rely on the brilliant internal weight-control program God gave us in the beginning: hunger pangs. And we must move around more as we work and play.

When we do those things, we can eat delicious, fattening foods forbidden from traditional reducing diets and still lose weight.

It's simple, right? Doesn't it sound natural? I'll teach you how to do it in this book, and soon you'll be losing weight the easy, natural way, in line with God's original plan, and without dieting.

I Can Eat *What*?

You can stop rubbing your eyes in disbelief now. You read it correctly. I am a certified medical doctor with an Ivy League nutrition background and obesity research experience, and I said it's okay to eat fattening food as you lose weight.

If you want to, you can eat meat-lover's pizza, ice cream, chocolate, or whatever else you like. You can eat processed and fast foods if you want to. Rejoice! The only limiter is that you have to eat those foods in smaller amounts than the world would have you believe is normal, and you have to wait to eat until you actually feel hunger pangs.

When my brother-in-law first read my book, he said I should have called it *The Eatin' Diet*. Maybe he's right. On this plan, even though you're eating smaller portions, you feel like you're eating a ton of food, and you feel incredibly satisfied. That happens because you let go of your guilt and actually pay attention to and enjoy each morsel that you put in your mouth.

Does this weight-loss philosophy surprise you? With a title like *The Eden Diet*, you probably expected me to tell you to eat food you might have found in Eden—food that is green, leafy, or grows on trees. Or maybe you expected me to advocate an organic or low-fat, no-sugar diet. But that's not what I'm saying at all. This plan is not about what food is right or wrong to eat.

God is merciful. He knows your weaknesses, and he knows what it will take to help you lose weight. Besides, he never said it was wrong to eat fattening food—not even for people who are overweight.

Disclaimer

You should check with your doctor before starting this plan. There may be foods you should not eat or exercises you should not perform for medical reasons. You may be allergic to certain foods, you may be on medicine that interacts with food (like some blood thinners and depression medicines), or you may have medical conditions that

A New Paradigm for Weight Loss

require a specialized diet (heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney disease, etc.).

In those cases, you might consider asking your doctor about how much in the way of treats you're allowed. Ask him or her if it's okay to cheat on your medical diet to help you stick to a weight-loss program long term. After all, the benefits from your weight loss may more than overshadow any negative consequences from a temporary departure from your ideal diet.

Don't worry; if you are not allowed to deviate from your ideal diet, you can still benefit from this plan. You can learn how to avoid eating for the wrong reasons, and you can adopt a healthier attitude about food and exercise.

The Seven-Day Challenge (As Though It's a Challenge!)

Your first commitment to this plan need be for only seven days. The number seven is significant. In the Bible, it appears numerous times and is considered to be the number of completion.

What am I asking you to complete in your first week? Your main assignment will be to finish reading *The Eden Diet* in its entirety. Whether or not you complete it will be a litmus test. Are you really as committed to losing weight as you say you are? Some people just want to think and read about losing weight without actually doing it. They read diet books for entertainment. I suppose it makes them feel less guilty—as though they're actually doing something productive to rectify their problem.

But the truth is you must accompany thinking with positive action if you want to succeed. The apostle James wrote, "Faith without deeds is useless" (James 2:20).

Are you ready to accompany your faith with deeds? Are you ready to join with me wholeheartedly? It's time to decide.

Don't worry; if you go with me, it will be easy. It will be so easy, in fact, that you won't want to stop. You will lose weight so effortlessly

Overview of the Eden Diet

and feel so joyous that you will wonder how on earth you ever made it through the first week on other diets.

The Seven-Day Challenge

1. Read through *The Eden Diet*.
2. Wait until you feel actual hunger pangs before you eat.
3. Eat small portions of normal food—just barely enough to take away your hunger.
4. When you are tempted to eat when you're not hungry, turn to God and pray.

During the first week, your main assignment (besides reading the book) is to wait until you feel actual hunger pangs—when your stomach is completely empty—before you eat. You also have to eat small portions of normal food, whether it's grilled chicken or french fries or chocolate cake. Eat what you like, but just barely enough to take away your hunger—perhaps a third to half a normal portion, and only when you're actually hungry. That's it.

To beat the temptation to eat when you're *not* hungry, turn to God and pray. Or become distracted in some other healthy activity.

Remember that as soon as you feel the next wave of bona fide hunger pangs, you can eat a little bit of that exact food that tempted you earlier when you weren't hungry. You're not really denying yourself; you're just delaying gratification until later.

Easy, right?

The Thirty-Day Measure of Success

On this plan, you will measure your progress in thirty-day blocks, using a chart that you may photocopy and fill out. You might ask, "Why thirty-day blocks?" The answer is simple. Thirty days is a

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convenient amount of time in which to measure your progress. It's long enough to experience a change in attitudes and in your weight, but it's not so long as to be tedious. It's an amount of time many people are willing to commit to for a trial run. And we're used to measuring time in months. That's it. There's no magic or heavy-duty science in that number.

That's why there are so many thirty-day money-back guarantees. We are willing to try new things for thirty days. By the end of that time, we usually decide we like the product and want to keep it. I believe that's what you will do in this case if you just give the program a chance.

So after you've finished the Seven-Day Challenge, spend some time filling out your Thirty-Day Record, using the chart. For example, you may set a goal such as "This month I will focus on always leaving a little food on my plate," or "This month I will focus on how my body feels when I eat healthy food versus junk food."

When you set your thirty-day goals, do it prayerfully. The mistake you may have made in the past was to leave God out of the equation. You really don't have control over your destiny, do you? Of course you don't. So don't determine what will happen in the thirty-day blocks based on your personal willpower. Ask God what he thinks you need to work on and go from there. And then write, "God willing, in the next thirty days, I will ..."

It only makes sense to do it that way. God knows more about what we need than we do. Each of us has a unique set of circumstances that contributed to our food issues, and each of us is affected to a different degree physically, emotionally, and spiritually by our weight problems. So we need prayerful, individualized plans for our thirty-day blocks.

Another benefit of setting individualized behavioral goals is that it allows you to compare yourself to yourself rather than compare yourself to others. Other people may need to focus on different behaviors than you do.

Remember, comparing yourself to others sets you up for failure. On the one hand, if you compare yourself to those who don't lose as

Overview of the Eden Diet

My Thirty-Day Record

Block # _____

Start Date _____ End Date _____

Starting Weight _____ Ending Weight _____

Starting Measurements

Ending Measurements

Chest _____ Chest _____

Waist _____ Waist _____

Hips _____ Hips _____

Thighs _____ Thighs _____

Arms _____ Arms _____

Behavioral Goals

This month, I will focus on:

1. _____

2. _____

My experience with those behaviors:

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much, you may become prideful, and you know what the Bible says about that. On the other hand, if you compare yourself to those who lose more weight, you might feel inadequate and become depressed.

It's okay to weigh yourself at the end of the thirty-day blocks of time, but I ask that you don't set particular weight-loss goals to achieve. Instead, *set one or two behavioral goals, and let the pounds fall where they may*. When you do that, you will feel less pressure, and that's always a good thing.

In subsequent months, you may add additional behavioral goals to your list if you believe it's necessary, but do so prayerfully. One mistake that people make is expecting too much from themselves too fast. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day.

Over the Hump After Thirty Days?

I would love to tell you that you'll be home free and invincible after thirty days, but it doesn't work that way. Current neurobiology literature absolutely supports that changing habits changes nerve pathways in the brain. However, it does not come close to suggesting a specific time frame for how long it takes to change habits. Nor does it suggest how long those brain chemistry changes stick if you revert back to your old habits.

Clearly, neurons (nerve cells) are known to have plasticity, which means they are moldable to an extent. In other words, your brain will soon forget what you taught it if you don't keep up the good behavior.

This modern information is, unfortunately, contrary to the popularized notion that it takes twenty-one days of repetition to ingrain a new habit. That notion originated back in 1960 with a book called *Psycho-Cybernetics*.¹ Unfortunately, the author of that book, Dr. Maxwell Maltz, based his theory on anecdotal observations as a plastic surgeon and on a paucity of research. The theory is clearly outdated in modern scientific circles, but it is a myth that hangs on tenaciously in the lay community. Innumerable authors have cited this notion as though it were an accepted, proven fact.

Overview of the Eden Diet

The take-home message is if a diet program promises you a quick fix or a permanent change for your bad habits after twenty-one (or thirty) days, it's just telling you what you want to hear. The fact is we're forever in a state of flux. We can either reinforce or work against our newly adopted attitudes, depending on the choices we make in the present. Put another way, you can fall off the wagon at any time, no matter whether or not you think you made it "over the hump" by making it to the thirty-day mark.

In this microwave society, we want everything fast and easy, and that includes changes in our habits and attitudes. But God knows it doesn't work that way. That's why Paul said in Romans 12:2 that you can "be transformed," with the implication that it will be a continual transformation as long as you live.

But here is the good news: psychologists say that the more you act a certain way, the more your attitudes will begin to agree with your actions, and the easier it will be to continue to act that way. In other words, your actions affect your attitudes and your attitudes affect your actions. The two reinforce each other. That's probably why the longer you stay on this plan, the more natural it feels to say no to unnecessary food and eat according to your bodily signals.

Don't just take my word for it, though. Trust your own experience. How do you feel now that you're on the seven-day challenge? Don't you feel great? Don't you feel liberated? Aren't you excited? Then of course you can make it through the first thirty-day block. And you can make it through all the other thirty-day blocks too.

There really is no getting over a hump on the Eden Diet. Your old diet mentality was the hump. Now it's all downhill—easier. Being on this plan for thirty-day blocks will be more like coasting than climbing. It is true that you will face challenges on this plan, just as you face challenges on any plan. But you can have victory over them. This time you're doing it with God on your side—and in manageable thirty-day increments.

Phases of Change

Even though I don't hold you to meeting deadlines during your thirty-day blocks, you will probably find that you naturally go through phases anyway.

Initially, most people revel in the joy and liberation of being able to guiltlessly eat food they enjoy again. It's like being released from prison. You think, "Woo-hoo! I'm free!" Maybe you'll even eat ice cream for breakfast, lunch, and dinner for a couple days.

I promise ... that party phase won't last very long. If it does, you will only end up feeling sluggish, tired, and generally gross. Fantastic! It will teach you a lesson. Soon enough, you'll learn to prefer the healthy food that makes you feel better physically. At least, you'll prefer healthy food most of the time.

In time and through trial and error, most people settle down with a diet that consists of a nice balance of the healthy food that nourishes them and the decadent treats that make them feel satisfied emotionally. When they eat junk, they learn to eat it in smaller amounts—a few bites of dessert at the end of a small, otherwise healthy meal, for example. That's why they can continue to lose weight.

No matter how slowly or quickly you progress on this plan, and no matter how many times you backslide, you'll still be better off in the long run than you would be with traditional dieting. You already know from firsthand experience that traditional diets don't work for long-term weight control.

Now that you have an overview of the diet, let's get busy exposing the lies and replacing them with the truth about how to lose weight.